

# **Women and their Relationship to Leader, Follower Commitment, and Job Performance: Netherlands, Belgium, and North Carolina**

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Transformational leadership has become a major initiative in organizational change, yet research on the impact of the similarity of leadership styles between leaders, and women who directly report to them, specifically in international settings, is lacking. Presenting the findings of two studies showed that (a) leaders, and women directly reporting to them sharing similar leadership styles, is a strong predictor of organizational commitment and improved job performance, and (b) emerging themes revealed that external pressures on women to conform to unwritten codes when in position of power are strong. Using quantitative data analysis for the Netherlands and Belgium study, and qualitative measures from North Carolina, USA, produced results of considerable, and as of yet, unknown proportions.

**Key Words:** Leadership, Dyad, Similarity, Sherpa, Women

Classical and emerging paradigms of leadership are different when examined from a male or female perspective (Jaynes, 1990; Meissner, 2005). Some key questions in leadership studies pertain to the influencing factors in the development of leadership styles and the general principles underlying research and theories described in the leadership literature, including social sources, Zeitgeist, and the psychological matrix of leadership. Furthermore, in most cases, leaders also serve as followers in their role and answer to a higher authority, be it a board of directors, a direct manager, or they may be representing an issue for a group, individuals, or an organization (Bennis, 1994). For example, female leaders in management roles will themselves be followers who may be required to report to a higher entity within the organization.

According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership is closest to the style that people think of when they describe the ideal leader, because this form of leadership helps

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followers to transcend their limitations, and raises them to higher levels of efficiency, integrity, and motivation. Bass identifies three ways in which leaders transform their followers: (a) raising the awareness of task value and importance, (b) helping the followers to identify their higher-order needs, and (c) having the followers focus on team goals versus individual interests.

Current conceptions of transformational leadership emphasizing empowerment of followers appear to be in accordance with contemporary organizational changes. The authors of this paper believe that transformational leadership theory provides relevance in respect to women and leadership. Presenting empirical evidence demonstrating that similarities or differences in the transformational leader-follower (female)-dyad correlate with organizational commitment and job performance in a sales organization, may encourage corporations to build up higher performing women managers (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Increasing organizational commitment while reducing the costly turnover of employees may be achieved by developing training to minimize weaknesses, thereby combating perceived and/or real negative consequences characteristically associated with organizational commitment to and performance for female managers.

This paper provides an analysis of a subset of results that pertain strictly to women in leadership roles from a previous study (Hamel, 2007). The original study included men and women but only a subset of the results for women are used in this paper for the purpose of integrating them with the results from the second study in order to discuss new findings.

The purpose of the previous study (Hamel, 2007) was to use quantitative methods to determine if similarity between leaders and their female followers could predict the female followers' organizational commitment and job performance. Similarity scores, organizational commitment scores, and job performance scores were used in the study and discussed in the following sections. Because of the importance to the success of the corporation as a whole and because of the applicability and impact of such a study to an organization, a Netherlands- and Belgium-based sales organization within an information technology services company, provided the interpretive domain and pool of selection for the first study presented here. The results were based on the data from 38 women salespeople and women sales support staff. The following hypotheses for this study (Study 1), which were considered relevant to women's leadership issues, are also discussed in this paper: After controlling for the demographic variables, the inclusion of the two similarity scores from each of the women leaders/followers in the study and their leader will add a significant amount of explained variance in the prediction of the respondents' (a) organizational commitment scores and (b) job performance scores.

Even though women comprise nearly half the global population, statistics about women in leadership roles still post low numbers (Myerson & Fletcher, 2000). The second study attempted to find answers to the following nine questions:

1. Why is the vision of achieving potential success for a goal or mission of greater importance to some women than others?
2. Why do some women step aside rather than stay in the leadership role?
3. What are women's attitudes toward goal attainment?
4. What are women's beliefs about who needs to achieve a goal?

5. What other reasons might be underlying women's decision to step aside and let a man take over?
6. What are the primary elements contributing to success for women who experienced being a Sherpa and went to the top? (In business, this could mean becoming the CEO; in the nonprofit sector, it could mean becoming the director or president of the organization.)
7. What happens if perceived or truly powerless women acquire temporary power and authority while simultaneously denying their possession of this power?
8. For women who have participated in starting or carrying on a business or program as Sherpa and failed, what elements caused that failure?
9. If failure is culture- or gender-related, what are the issues that can help identify these essentials through insider knowledge?

Similar to Hamel (2007), the research looked at the disempowering relationships women experience within economic and societal leadership models that favor male-oriented systems.

Both studies included extensive literature reviews regarding different styles of leadership and the possible implications to gender, including transactional and transformational leadership, autocratic, laissez-faire, behavioral, and situational leadership, and trait theory. Noting a lack of research on leadership by women, the researchers of both studies concluded that the general literature in the field of leadership suggested that transformational leaders must use their abilities to drive change in the organization (Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bass, 1994; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Pillai & Williams, 2004).

## Study 1

### **Method**

#### ***Participants***

The study was conducted in a large IT organization located in the Netherlands and Belgium. Ninety-eight females were selected to participate in the study because of their leadership roles in the organization. Of the 98 surveys distributed to the female leaders, a total of 38 responses were received and used in the study. Respondents' ages ranged between 21 and greater than 60, with a median age between 30 and 39 (thirty salespeople and 8 sales support personnel in management positions). All of the respondents had attended high school; 97% received a college or graduate degree. The majority of the participants were married (86%). The respondents' service with the company ranged between 1 and 10 years.

#### ***Instruments***

The first study built upon Bass's (1985) transformational leadership style, as defined in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 2000), and measured its association with organizational commitment using the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday, Porter, & Steers; 1982) and job performance, as measured by the Self-Appraisal Job Performance Scale (Stevens, Beyer, & Trice, 1978).

The MLQ Short Form (MLQ 5X-Short), which was used to measure

transformational leadership, is best known for determining leadership strengths and leadership weaknesses that require further development (Bass & Avolio, 2000). Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles are measured by the MLQ. The MLQ has been the most widely used instrument for measuring transformational leadership style, founded on Bass's multifactor leadership theory, for more than 15 years (Hunt, 1999). The instrument has been demonstrated to be a reliable, valid instrument that has been administered to followers, leaders, and peers along with being used in a 360-degree fashion (Bass & Avolio, 2000). Only questions from the Transformational Leadership Scale of the MLQ were used in this study. This study requested that the sales staff in the organization rate themselves, their sales managers, and the sales vice president in respect to their own perception of leadership style. A total of 5 scales related to transformational leadership were used to determine the followers' transformational leadership styles, and their perceptions of their direct sales managers' transformational leadership styles.

Three sets of 20 questions in the five Transformational Leadership subscales were used for each respondent to rate self, sales managers, and sales vice president. The five subscales used to determine transformational leadership style are (a) idealized influence, (b) idealized influence-behavioral, (c) individualized consideration, (d) inspirational motivation, and (e) intellectual stimulation. A 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*frequently, if not always*) was used from the MLQ (5X-Short) for this study. An example item was the statement, "An effective leader provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts." The transformational leadership score was determined by summing the scores from all items from all the subscales in the MLQ and dividing by the number of questions (20). This was done for each of the three sets. Similarity for follower versus direct leader was determined by taking the absolute value of the transformational leadership score of the follower's self-rating and subtracting it from the transformational leadership score for the sales manager.

The OCQ comprises 15 items that were developed to determine employees' acceptance of their organization's values, the desire of the employees to stay with the current organization, and the eagerness of the employees to expend effort. This study used a 7-point Likert-type scale that rated the responses from 0 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*). An example item was the statement, "This organization means a great deal to my personal well-being." Morrison (2004) found a correlation between OCQ scores and the intention of individuals to remain with an organization. Respondents were asked to rate themselves in terms of commitment to the organization and the average of the 15 items was used to determine the respondents appraisal of her organizational commitment.

The OCQ is based on the Mowday et al. (1982) model, a widely used instrument for measuring the construct of organizational commitment (Gbolahan, 2003). The model operationalizes the organizational commitment through the following three components: "a strong belief in and acceptance of organizational goals and values (identification), a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization (involvement), and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (loyalty)" (Gbolahan, p. 275). The Self-Appraisal Job Performance Scale is composed of four items using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*low*) to 7 (*high*). The first two items on the questionnaire refer to quality and productivity of the self-appraisers' work (Porter &

Lawler, 1968); the next two items require the self-appraisers view their job performance comparison to their peers and their peers' ability to perform their work, in comparison to themselves (Evans, 1979). The internal consistency, as defined by Cronbach's alpha, for the Self-Appraisal Job Performance Scale was .77 and .80, respectively, in the research performed by Yousef (1998, 2000). The respondents were asked to rate themselves in terms of job performance and the average of the four items was used to determine the respondents appraisal of her job performance. An example item was the statement, "How do you evaluate the performance of your peers at their jobs compared with yourself doing the same type of work?"

### ***Procedure***

For both studies (1 and 2), the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University performed an ethics review, which included letters of cooperation, choice of protocols, consent, and confidentiality.

A correlational, descriptive analysis survey design was used, questionnaires were completed through an e-mail sent to each respondent providing a link to a Web site that listed all questions, and the answer from each respondent was collected afterwards. E-mails were sent to all 98 women in the entire sales organization in Belgium and The Netherlands, excluding the sales managers, who were the managers of comparison for the employees; he also provided a cover letter describing the study. In addition, a link to the Web site that provided an MLQ (5X-Short) rater and self-rater form, the OCQ survey, the Self-Appraisal Job Performance Scale, and a demographic form, was provided (Hamel, 2007). An apriori significance level of  $p < .05$  was established (Creswell, 2002; Pugel, 2004). For the hypothesis, the MLQ (5X-Short) rater and self-rater, the OCQ, and the self-appraisal job performance survey were measured solely from the respondents' perspective.

### **Data Analysis**

Stat Plus V2.5 software from Berk and Carey (2004) was used to analyze the data from the responses stored in the Microsoft Access database. The database files were imported into the tool using drivers provided in Stat Plus V2.5. Items not answered or intentionally left blank were excluded from the analysis (Hamel, 2007). Multiple regression and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to determine the relationship between the independent variables and the intervening variables with organizational commitment and job performance, which were the dependent variables (Hamel, 2007).

### **Results**

Table 1 shows the five primary scales, which include the three MLQ scales for the respondents' rating, that of their sales manager, the OCQ, and the SAJPS (Self-Appraisal Job Performance Scale). All five scales were intercorrelated with the demographic variables of age, education, marital status, job type, and years of service.

**Table 1**  
***Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Primary Scales***

Primary Scale	Age	Level of Education	Marital Status	Job Type <sup>a</sup>	Years of Service
Transformational Leadership (Self)	-.064	.183	.159	-.111	-.093
Transformational Leadership (Manager)	-.218*	.133	-.028	.097	-.225
Organizational Commitment	-.175	.317	-.060	-.143	-.054
Job Performance	-.231	.075	-.017	-.021	-.150

Note.  $N = 38$

<sup>a</sup>Job Type: Salesperson = 0 and Sales Support = 1

\* $p < .05$

There was a significant ( $p < .05$ ) negative correlation for transformational leadership for the sales managers as perceived by the female followers in respect to the age of the respondent ( $r = -.218$ ). This indicated that the older female salespeople or female sales support personnel view their direct manager as less transformational as they become older.

For the Pearson correlation coefficients, the transformational leadership difference score (similarity score) between the sales personnel and their sales manager approached 0 when similarity was high and moved away from 0 when similarity was low. Therefore, a negative correlation between transformational leadership difference scores and organizational commitment or job performance scores indicated a positive relationship between transformational leadership similarity and the dependent variables.

### ***Hypothesis 1***

Hypothesis 1 stated that after controlling for the demographic variables, the inclusion of the similarity scores between the women sales personnel and that of their sales managers and sales vice president would add a significant amount of explained variance in the prediction of organizational commitment. The first step in the regression model included the demographic variables of age, education, marital status, job type, and years of service. The second step in the regression model added the two similarity scores for transformational leadership between the female followers and their sales managers. The hierarchical regression analysis predicting organizational commitment is shown in Table 2. Although the five demographic variables accounted for 12.8% of the explained variance for organizational commitment the regression was not significant with  $p = .467$ .

**Table 2**  
***Regression Analysis for Predicting Organizational Commitment with  
 Selected Demographic Variables***

Variable	$\beta$	Std. Error	t-Stat	P- value	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	df	F
Step 1					.128	-.008	5	.942
Age	-.156	.196	-.794	.433				
Level of Education	.270	.153	1.767	.087				
Marital Status	-.110	.365	-.301	.765				
Job Type <sup>a</sup>	-.067	.272	-.246	.807				
Years of Service	.095	.188	.506	.616				
Step 2					.359	.234	6	2.889
Age	-.150	.171	-.875	.388				
Level of Education	.183	.136	1.348	.187				
Marital Status	-.204	.319	-.638	.528				
Job Type <sup>a</sup>	-.247	.243	-	.317				
			1.018					
Years of Service	.164	.165	.990	.330				
Transformational	-.391	.117	-	.002				
Diff (Self vs. Mgr.)			3.336					

Note.  $N = 38$ .

<sup>a</sup> Job Type: Salesperson = 0 and Sales Support = 1

The second step included the two similarity scores for transformational leadership style. The scores attributed an additional 23.1% to the explained variance for organizational commitment and was significant at  $p = .024$ .

### ***Hypothesis 2***

Hypothesis 2 stated that after controlling for the demographic variables, the inclusion of the similarity scores between the women sales personnel and that of their sales managers would add a significant amount of explained variance in the prediction of job performance.



**Table 3**  
***Regression Analysis for Predicting Job Performance with Selected Demographic Variables***

Variable	$\beta$	Std. Error	t-Stat	P-value	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$	df	F
Step 1					.063	-.083	5	.431
Age	-.376	.330	-1.137	.264				
Level of Education	.058	.257	.226	.823				
Marital Status	.202	.614	.330	.744				
Job Type <sup>a</sup>	.120	.457	.263	.794				
Years of Service	-.112	.316	-.352	.727				
Step 2					.379	.259	6	3.157
Age	-.364	.273	-1.332	.192				
Level of Education	-.108	.217	-.497	.623				
Marital Status	.024	.509	.0467	.963				
Job Type <sup>a</sup>	-.223	.388	-.575	.570				
Years of Service	.019	.264	.070	.945				
Transformational	-.744	.187	-3.974	.000				
Diff (Self vs. Mgr.)								

Note.  $N = 38$

<sup>a</sup>Job Type: Salesperson = 0 and Sales Support = 1

The first step of the regression model included the demographic variables of age, level of education, marital status, job type, and years of service. The second step of the regression model added the two similarity scores for transformational leadership between the followers and their sales managers. The hierarchical regression analysis predicting job performance is shown in Table 3. Although the five demographic variables accounted for 6.3% of the explained variance for organizational commitment the regression was not significant with  $p = .824$ .

The second step included the two similarity scores for transformational leadership style. The scores attributed an additional 31.6% to the explained variance for organizational commitment and was significant with  $p = .016$ .

## Study 2

### *Method*

To help understand and interpret the second study, a new model, the Sherpa leadership model: A model of disempowerment (Cassard, 2008), was utilized. Jamling Norgay, the Sherpa who made it possible for Sir Edmund Hillary to be the first man to climb Mount Everest said, “For a foreigner, a Sherpa means someone who carries loads at high altitude” (as cited in Clark & Coburn, 2002, p. 1). In today’s world, Sherpa stands

for the job description of someone who acts as a guide and leads others successfully to the summit. As used in this study, Sherpa refers to a woman who carries the burden and/or responsibility of the workload or mission of the job, but does not access paths that lead to success.

The basic premise of the model is the sequential steps women take (conversely, are prevented from taking) and the imposed disruptions that occur (intentionally or otherwise) on their path toward accomplishment and leadership. During the climb of the Sherpa, there is a start, middle, and an end. The Sherpa leadership model presents an opportunity to explore a similar path, in which the base camp where the Sherpa resides is analogous to the women and their decision-making processes.

### ***Participants***

The sample consisted of 10 women, selected from the membership of the National Association of Women's Business Organization (NAWBO) in North Carolina. The age range of the participants was between 32 and 60 years. Eight of the participants were college graduates; three held a master's degree. Two participants had completed high school and earned additional career or industry-specific certifications. Seven of the women were married, one was single, and two were divorced. In the married group, four had children. One of the divorcees had a child, the other divorcee and the single woman did not have children. All of the participants were Caucasian. The women spoke English as their first language. All of the participants were born in the United States.

Three professional classifications were established to clarify the business background of the participants: Classification I (CI) was assigned to women business owners. Classification II (CII) was assigned to women who were business owners and worked or were actively involved in some additional professional venue. Classification III (CIII) was assigned to women who worked in a corporate setting. To control for bias, all 10 participants followed the same seven interview questions developed by the researcher as well as procedures modeled after sample protocols recommended by Creswell (2002).

### ***Data collection***

The process of coding the text, examining the codes for redundancy and overlap, developing description from the data, defining themes, and connecting and interrelating themes, was aided by the qualitative research software program co-NVivo7™. The NVivo7™ is a content-analysis package that allows researchers to establish lexical and conceptual relations among words, to index text files, and to conduct pattern-matching and search occurrences of nodes in the text. Nodes are given attributes, or properties, to describe and characterize them.

## **Data Analysis**

Leedy and Ormrod (2001), as well as Creswell (2002), emphasize the importance of planning research carefully and concur with Seidman's (1998) statement, which encourages researchers to "strive for a rational process that is both repeatable and documentable" (p. 15). Initial data analysis yielded a substantial number of codes. After subsequent analysis was reduced to a few major themes through the elimination of redundancies and codes that could not be categorized. The analysis produced themes that were identifiable as ordinary themes (expected by the researcher), unexpected themes (unforeseen and not expected), hard-to-classify themes, and major or minor themes.

## Results

The model proposed a sequence of steps that women take during their Sherpa path and aids in understanding how to interpret and follow this path, as well as recognizing the specific base camps in which the women reside and develop their decision-making process. The subsequent interpretations and conclusions were based on each of the research questions stated in this study.

***Question 1. Why is the vision of achieving potential success for a goal or mission of greater importance to some women than others?***

Seen through the lens of the Sherpa leadership model, it appears that women's age (access), their description of where they were in terms of their careers and accomplishments (path), and how they reconciled their personal life with their business obligations (kinship), influenced the degree of importance assigned to achieving the potential success for a goal. Supported by the data from the textual descriptions, we concluded that women's strong belief in what is right or wrong, combined with an attitude of knowing how to distinguish what is important, surfaced as an influencing factor for all the study participants.

***Question 2. Why do some women step aside rather than stay in the role of leadership?***

The data appeared to support the conclusion that women consciously or subconsciously accept a male hierarchy. By applying the model, the researcher concluded that stepping aside took place more often at Base Camp 3, when individuality (internal) is confronted with the goal (external), creating a struggle between external pressures and internal desires. Apparently, these situations resolved themselves because the women listened to, and followed a set of ethical beliefs (kinship) that would not allow compromise, and prompting their stepping aside. On other occasions, external pressure—such as fear, perceived as unhealthy or otherwise unacceptable, prompted an involuntary stepping aside.

***Question 3. What are their attitudes toward goal attainment?***

An emerging picture strengthened by the data, utilizing action verbs, indicated an exponential degree of importance attached toward goal attainment. Depending on the challenges experienced by the women, as well as the base camp in which they resided at the time of the challenge, the data—horizon of the experience—brought to light different nuances in the women's attitudes. The researcher followed Moustakas's (1994) guidelines for reduction and elimination of testing for two requirements in order to understand the experience and determine the horizons of the participants' experience: (a) Does it include a moment of the experience necessary for fully understanding that experience, and (b) is it possible to abstract and label it? Expressions meeting both requirements were included as a horizon of the experience. Recurring statements were removed. In the words of Moustakas, "The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience" (p. 121). Goal attainment in general was perceived as a very personal and individualistic (Base Camp 3) endeavor. However, it seemed to contain a subliminal feel that was based on the women's personal definition of leadership. As such, depending on what negative or positive qualities each woman assigned to her profiled male/female leader, her attitude about goal attainment was reflective of that leader.

***Question 4. What are their beliefs about who needs to achieve a goal?***

Although the data provided broad support for participants' consensual emphasis

on the importance of the matter, the researcher concluded that the participants' opinions in regard to what stage in life these goals ought to be personal (kinship-path-Base Camp 2) or professional (unity-individuality-Base Camp 1 and Base Camp 3). Respect for individual's rights about choosing to a higher or lesser degree the extent of what that achievement ought to be, came forth. Interestingly, the depth of thought given to the complexity of the achievement seemed to depend somewhat on the level of formal education achieved and was acknowledged and recognized by the women.

***Question 5. What other reasons are underlying the decision to step aside and let men take over?***

The data showed the multifaceted aspects for such a decision. Women residing in Base Camp 1 tended to step aside at an earlier stage partially because of a lack of self-confidence, uncertainties on how to see the project through to completion (unity), and a lack of role models or mentors who could be called on for support (access). Some women adopted cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), giving preference to personal or other matters at moments of decisions, thereby allowing them to step aside gracefully. For women residing in Base Camp 3, the data showed that depending on the size of the project or mission, the decision to step aside was triggered by a concern about prolonged disagreements rooted in gender differences. Recognition of the politically sensitive aspects of their positions, led the researcher to conclude that some women took the approach of "for the greater good," and stepped aside.

***Question 6. What are the primary elements contributing to success for women who experienced being a Sherpa and did go to the top?***

In business this could mean becoming the CEO, in the nonprofit sector it may be the director or president of the organization. The data were supportive in showing that women who recognized their expertise early on, in addition to having a long-term goal or picture in mind, seemed to move back and forth within the base camps until they reached the one from which they chose, or could reach, the path to the summit. What apparently influenced reaching the summit was how well the woman negotiated the challenges (external) along the way, combined with what she had learned from her previous experiences (internal). This became quite clear through the textural descriptions and the data from each participant's invariant constituents. Perhaps the lessons learned from each base camp translated into an understanding of the importance of each step involved in reaching the summit. That included recognizing how some acculturated attitudes perceived to be negative about women (e.g., forcefulness, competitiveness) could be viewed as positives if teamwork is involved (unity-kinship-goal).

***Question 7. What happens if perceived or truly powerless women acquire some temporary power and authority, while simultaneously denying their possession of this power?***

The data confirmed another assumption: Women apply mechanisms of disassociation that have been learned or reinforced by particular systems of beliefs that originate in societal and economic models that favor male oriented strategies. It appeared when women were handed authority (access-external) at an early stage in their career; however, they did not always recognize it or felt they needed to live up to it (internal). The data showed this stood in contrast to women who acquired power and/or authority on their own (individuality-internal) at an early stage, and seemed to experience something akin to an imposter syndrome. The textural descriptions illustrated the researcher's

conclusion that for some women, this separation among perceived reality, recognition of self within a bounded system, and misalignment of social and gender norms, could occur in any one of the three base camps.

***Question 8. For women who have participated in starting or carrying on a business or program as Sherpa and failed, what are the elements that have caused failure?***

Horizontalization (a process of translating the horizon of the experience to invariant constituents) confirmed that women who failed to see their goal(s) come to fruition, seemed to have placed more emphasis on external elements (path-access) which were not always within their control (example horizon of experience: goals promote discussion and provide a path - number of references in horizontalization-6). However, some women who had moved through or arrived at certain stages in the process also perceived themselves as having been manipulated to stay in a particular role (base camp) with no further chance (access) to carry on. Women also found themselves moving to different positions (path) within the same environment (internal-kinship), leading to the conclusion that they were repeating some of the same dysfunctional patterns that lead to the original situation.

***Question 9. If failure is culturally- or gender-related, what are the issues that can help us identify these essentials through inside knowledge?***

Each woman's expression during the interview and her emerging horizons mirrored her personality, resulting in a conceptualization of the themes of her experience. Consequently, the researcher concluded that if failure is culturally related, it is, among other issues, reflective of an apparent struggle between core female and male principles residing in the woman's mind (unity-individuality), while attempting to operate in a predominantly male social structure (access-path-goal). The data were supportive of a gender-related matter, which was apparently encountered by the women in their attempts to communicate with men. The area under discussion seemed to be one of not being heard (kinship-goal). This ostensibly speaking in a different voice seemed to have led to confusion and an inability to maintain or move forward. It appeared that most of these issues arose while the women stayed in Base Camp 2 or Base Camp 3 on the model.

## **Discussion**

The analysis of the first study's data resulted in positive findings. All hypotheses concerning whether including data on direct leadership styles provides higher predictability for organizational commitment and job performance for the women followers were supported. The conclusions were expected to provide important insights about the decision-making processes that women employ regarding leadership.

The second study, which applied the Sherpa leadership model's concept of how far along on the path toward accomplishment and leadership a woman is, and in which base camp she makes her decisions, provided information about her self-perceived stages of life and offered answers to the posited research questions. The findings supported the original assumption that emerging theories of leadership will require an understanding of the impact patriarchal societies on women's psyches and behavior. The findings also acknowledged the existence of what Blackmore (1999) termed *monoculture of the powerful* (often expressed by referring to gender or race), and in this study alluding to predominantly white males. Furthermore, the researcher also suggested that it is possible to prevent occurrences of unfavorable patterns of behavior in women who try to reach the

top, by changing societal and acculturated false assumptions about women's abilities.

The findings of the second study supported some of the data presented in the first study, providing incentives to identify the weaknesses and strengths of new or developing leadership trends in a changing society. Both studies suggest that current leadership has not tapped into the vast potential of women's abilities, in spite of the fact that women appear to think of leadership as positive and achievable. Although women began to make gains in managerial and professional occupations during the 1970s and 1980s, the rise originated from a very small base (Kanter, 1993). The findings imply that purposeful development of women in leadership positions could result in a more ethically oriented organizational work environment and provide current leaders with valuable information on how to understand the female decision-making processes. Past studies have reported on the potential to improve organizational commitment and job performance through follower-leader matching and/or leadership training, to address dissimilarities that have a negative impact on the organization (Charon, 2003; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Jago & Vroom, 1982). Another observation indicates that transformational leadership is not only important from a leader and/or follower standpoint, in relation to organizational commitment and job performance, but also that the similarity in transformational leadership styles between leader and follower is of equal importance (Felfe & Schyns, 2004). Although similarity in leadership has started to be addressed in the past few years, there has been very few studies found that specifically address female followers in respect to their leaders. It is important for organizations to better understand how cooperation between leader and their subordinates affects female followers' performance and attitudes. By studying the phenomenon of congruence between leader and female follower in the work place, organizations can better match female followers to leaders in order to provide the highest probability of a successful cooperative relationship.

Both studies focused on women in leadership roles. Neither study intended to present a prosopography or extrapolate a specific cultural variable pointing to possible implications or influences on women leaders. Future studies that incorporate these aspects may provide an enhanced perception of the relationships with organizational commitment and job performance, in addition to providing and expanding a general understanding about the external pressures on women to conform to unwritten codes when in position of power. For instance, future studies might utilize a more diversified group of women, as well as greater diversity in geographical locations. Research using different age groups and exploring the possible impact of religious and spiritual beliefs, may provide additional and valuable information.

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